

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMU #0885/01 1141442  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 241442Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6052  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000885

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: EX-MINISTER OF DEFENSE CRITICIZES PRESIDENT AND  
ARMY OVER MANPADS, CIV/MIL RELATIONS

REF: A. 05 MANAGUA 1771  
[B](#). 05 MANAGUA 1590  
[C](#). 04 MANAGUA 3305

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#). SUMMARY: (C) Ambassador and poloff held a wide-ranging discussion with Nicaraguan ex-Minister of Defense Jose Adan Guerra on April 19. Guerra strongly criticized President Bolanos' handling of the MANPADS issue, and commented that the Nicaraguan Army leadership will resist MANPADS destruction until the next administration to try to get a "better deal" for the missiles. He claimed that Bolanos did not support his efforts to assert civilian control over the military and slammed the current Minister of Defense for "cozying up" to the Army. Guerra also described his current relationship to presidential candidate Eduardo Montealegre as an unofficial advisor on security and foreign policy issues. END SUMMARY.

#### BOLANOS FLUBBED HANDLING OF MANPADS DESTRUCTION

- - - - -

[2](#). (C) During an April 19 meeting with Ambassador and poloff, former Minister of Defense Jose Adan Guerra described MANPADS as his biggest "headache" during his time as Minister. He said that the MANPADS issue was badly managed by President Bolanos from the beginning, when the President publicly pledged to President Bush that he would destroy Nicaragua's stockpiles -- even though Guerra advised him to destroy the MANPADS quietly. The FSLN, with surreptitious support from Sandinista elements in the Army who wish to bargain the MANPADS for expensive military hardware, subsequently turned the MANPADS into a political issue and proclaimed the missiles "emblems of sovereignty." Guerra claimed that the Army was behind the National Assembly's passage of the small arms law that took away the President's authority to destroy the remaining missiles and transferred it to the National Assembly (ref C).

[3](#). (C) Guerra advised the Ambassador to try to make the MANPADS a neutral issue by promoting the UN Resolution on MANPADS (signed by Nicaragua) and by educating journalists and others that MANPADS reduction is a worldwide policy, not something aimed specifically at Nicaragua.

PRESIDENT DID NOT SUPPORT EFFORT TO ASSERT CIVILIAN CONTROL  
OVER THE MILITARY

- - - - -  
- - - - -

14. (C) Guerra told us that he spent his time as Minister working to modernize the Ministry of Defense and make the armed forces accountable to civilian authorities -- a goal that he said Bolanos never wholeheartedly supported. He claimed to have an aide memoire from a meeting between Bolanos and then-armed forces commander General Carrion in which Carrion told Bolanos that he would die for the President, but that Bolanos should not try to impose Ministry authority over the Army and allow the generals direct access to the President. This tacit agreement has ensured the Army's continued political and financial autonomy during Bolanos's tenure, Guerra asserted. As a "reward" for Guerra's efforts to promote civilian authority, the Army constantly worked to undermine him with Bolanos, calling him a "gringo sympathizer." Current Minister of Defense Avil Ramirez has also criticized Guerra for being "too pro-gringo" during his tenure and "buried" the Defense White Paper that Guerra worked hard to publish in early 2005 (ref B).

GUERRA: EDUARDO SHOULD MAKE A DEAL WITH THE PLC TO PREVENT FSLN VICTORY

- - - - -

15. (C) Presidential candidate Eduardo Montealegre asked Guerra to be his advisor on security and foreign policy issues, which Guerra has agreed to do informally. Montealegre should make security issues a theme of his campaign, Guerra stated. In fact, in his view, the Ambassador should push all of the candidates to declare their position on MANPADS destruction.

16. (C) Regarding the elections, Guerra believes that Montealegre should make a deal with the PLC and accept the vice presidential nomination for himself and several deputy

nominations for his supporters. Guerra described PLC leader Arnoldo Aleman as an "open wound" for Nicaragua that is very difficult to heal. Despite their disgust with Aleman's corruption, Guerra claimed that many Liberals, including close supporters of Montealegre, will vote for the PLC to avoid an FSLN victory.

COMMENT: CURRENT MINISTER HAS DIFFERENT PRIORITIES

- - - - -

17. (C) President Bolanos appointed the current Minister of Defense Avil Ramirez to his post in June 2005, after Guerra's resignation and shortly before the apex of the political crisis between the Bolanos administration and the PLC-FSLN pact, which threatened to cut Bolanos' presidency short. Bolanos and Ramirez' top priority during and after the crisis has been to cultivate good relations with the armed forces at the expense of all else, including MANPADS destruction and White Paper implementation. Emboffs, led by Ambassador, continue to push for MANPADS destruction at all levels. We have received encouraging statements, but no substantive action. Ramirez stated publicly on April 19 that the next tranche of 651 MANPADS would be destroyed before Nicaragua hosts the Defense Ministerial conference in October, but his words have yet to be confirmed by a positive vote in the hostile National Assembly. He also commented that the remaining 400 will not be destroyed because they are needed for Nicaragua's defense, a statement that runs counter to his assurances in private that the MANPADS are not needed for Nicaragua's defense and should be destroyed.

TRIVELLI